Countries and Joint Commissions meetings are held periodically.

A new Indo-EU Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development has also come into force since August, 1994. In addition, a Cooperation Strategy has also been launched between India and the European Community for a period of five years recently.

In respect of East Europe, a pro-active customized strategy was adopted to adapt to the new situation with a view to boost trade by adopting measures like substitution of rupee payment trade by hard currency trade, counter trade direct business contacts at the grass-roots level, establishment of joint ventures, identification and development of more viable transport and transit routes, evolution of a more liberalised credit policy vis-a-vis CIS and building up the image of Indian goods through emphasis of quality, launching of brand names, conducting publicity campaigns etc.

All these efforts are expected to further boost India's exports to Europe.

**Extending V.A.B.A.L. to Engineering Sector**

2041. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to extend the value-based advance licensing scheme to the engineering sector;

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal;

(c) what will be the specific benefits of this proposal to the engineering sector;

(d) whether there is also a proposal to replace the existing International Price Reimbursement Scheme (IPRS) by an alternative scheme; and

(e) if so, what are the details of the scheme and in what way this scheme will be an improvement on the existing IPRS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) The Value based Advance Licensing Scheme is already available to the engineering sector. However following the withdrawal of IPRS for engineering products from 1.4.94, a new scheme called the Engineering Products Exports (Replenishment of Iron and Steel Intermediates) Scheme has been notified on the 1st March, 1995 for sourcing Iron and Steel intermediate inputs at near international prices from indigenous Steel producers for facilitating their exports. Under the Scheme, Iron and Steel intermediates can be sourced from any indigenous Steel producer after export of engineering products.

**Demand, Supply and free import of edible oils**

2042. SHRI ANANT RAM JAISWAL:
SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present position regarding the deamand and supply of edible oils and whether Government have allowed free import of edible oils;

(b) if so, what are the names of firms/agencies/Public Sector Undertakings which have been given permission in this regard and on what basis togetherwith the details of quantity variety of imported edible oils and the estimated foreign exchange involved in such import;

(c) what will be the role of Government in respect of pricing and distribution in the deal of free import of edible oil and in what way the common people will benefit from the import; and

(d) whether it is a fact that Government are committed to import foodgrains/food items in proportionate to a certain portion of their consumption according to GATT agreement?